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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#). Mideast

[1](#)2. US-Israel Relations

Election polls:

A Yediot/Mina Zemach (Dahaf Institute) poll held this week:

- "Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of last week's poll.)
- Kadima 36 (39); Labor Party 21 (19); Likud 14 (15); Shas 11 (11); Yisrael Beiteinu 11 (10); National Union-National Religious Party 9 (8); Arab parties 7 (8); Meretz 6 (4); United Torah Judaism 5 (6).
- Yediot says that 35 percent of the public do not intend to cast their votes.

Maariv printed the results of a TNS/Teleseker Polling Institute survey:

- "Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of last week's poll.)
-- Kadima 37 (39); Labor Party 21 (20); Likud 14 (15); National Union-National Religious Party 11 (8-9); Yisrael Beiteinu 10 (8); Shas 9 (9-10); Arab parties 7-9 (9); United Torah Judaism 5 (5); Meretz 5 (6).

The Jerusalem Post published the results of a Smith Institute poll conducted for the newspaper:

- "Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of last week's poll.)
- Kadima 34 (36-37); Labor Party 19-20 (18-19); Likud 15 (15); Shas 11 (9-10); Yisrael Beiteinu 10-11 (9-10); National Union-National Religious Party 10 (9-10); Arab parties 9 (9-10); United Torah Judaism 5-6 (5-6); Meretz 5 (5);

Hatzofe printed the results (in Knesset seats) of a poll conducted for the newspaper by Prof. Yitzhak Katz's Maagar Mohot Institute:

- Kadima 34; Labor Party 20; Likud 15; Shas 8; Yisrael Beiteinu 1; National Union-National Religious Party 7; Meretz 6-7; Pensioners' Party 2.;

Maariv reported that an internal Likud poll conducted among 450,000 "historical" Likud members registered since 1992 found that most of them will vote for Kadima, Shas, and various right-wing parties in Tuesday's elections.

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post reported that next Wednesday, Deputy US National Security Advisor Elliott and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch

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are scheduled to arrive in the region for three days of

talks in Israel and the PA. The Jerusalem Post quoted US diplomatic officials as saying that now that the elections were coming to a close, the visibility of the US diplomatic role would increase. The Jerusalem Post reported that James Wolfensohn, the Quartet's special Middle East envoy, is scheduled to arrive Monday for three days of meetings.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Thursday, the Defense Ministry met with a team of US defense officials for a round of strategic talks based on a memorandum of understanding signed between Israel and the US in 1987. The newspaper wrote that the talks take place once a year and focus on cooperation in arms development and production.

All media (leading stories in Yediot and Ha'aretz) quoted Acting PM Ehud Olmert as saying on Thursday that FM Tzipi Livni will become deputy prime minister should Kadima win next week's elections. Olmert was also quoted as saying that Livni could retain the foreign ministry portfolio should she want to do so. Speaking on Israel Radio this morning, a senior Kadima member said that Shimon Peres would play an important role in the government's foreign policy if Kadima won the elections.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Likud Chairman MK Binyamin Netanyahu as saying Thursday at a campaign rally that the Right could still win enough support to prevent Olmert from forming a coalition. His remarks came after Olmert limited Kadima's prospective coalition partners to parties that accept his plan to withdraw unilaterally from most of the West Bank. However, Minister-without-Portfolio Tzachi Hanegbi, who is considered Kadima's most rightwing candidate, was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that even the Likud would end up joining a government led by Olmert, and that he did not think Olmert had veered from the path that PM Sharon had intended to follow. Maariv quoted Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the Shas party's spiritual mentor, as saying that Israelis voting for Kadima will "go to hell." The newspaper cited a response from Kadima that Rabbi Yosef's remarks will cause Shinui voters to move to Kadima. Israel Radio cited a denial by Yosef associates.

PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas was quoted as saying Wednesday in an interview with Ha'aretz that a peace deal to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Abbas was quoted as saying that he had proposed to the US to open covert negotiations for a final status settlement. The talks would be spearheaded by President George Bush, after the new Israeli government is set up. Abbas was quoted as saying that he had also raised the idea at a meeting with Shimon Peres (Kadima) two weeks ago in Jordan. However, Ha'aretz quoted a senior Palestinian source as saying that Bush had not responded to Abbas's suggestion to pressure the new Israeli government to abandon its unilateral policy and resume the peace process. Abbas was quoted as saying that the Hamas government would not stop him from negotiating with Israel and that if both sides reached an agreement, he would be the one to sign it and if necessary, would even put it to a referendum. He was quoted as saying that he would act to moderate Hamas and that at least one Hamas minister told him he would be ready to talk to Israel on ministerial issues. Abbas reportedly said he feared Israel was not interested in negotiations and was avoiding them under the pretext of having no Palestinian partner. Addressing the Israeli voter Abbas reportedly said, "These are historic times. I can assure you that you have a peace partner. Perhaps this is the last chance to give both our nations the right to live safely. The future generations would not forgive us if we pass it up."

The Jerusalem Post reported that FM Livni phoned Paul Wolfowitz, Wolfensohn's successor as president of the World Bank, and asked for the bank's involvement in encouraging poultry growers in Gaza to immediately destroy their infected fowl. The newspaper said that Livni's call came amid growing Israeli concern that without international intervention -- both in compensating the farmers and physically helping them destroy the poultry -- the necessary steps to stop the spread of bird flu would not be taken. Israel Radio cited suspicions raised by Agriculture Minister Zeev Boim that cases of bird flu broke out in the PA several weeks ago, but that the PA pretended that those were occurrence of Newcastle disease. Yediot cited the concern of the Agriculture Ministry that if the Palestinians do not destroy enough fowl, the virus could break out again in Israel. Israel Radio reported on full Israel-PA cooperation on the matter of bird flu

at this time. The radio reported that bird flu has reached Jordan. Israel Radio reported that FM Livni asked UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to help eradicate bird flu in the PA.

Ha'aretz reported that the regime of restrictions on movement imposed by Israel on the Palestinians has divided the West Bank into dozens of closed or partially closed enclaves isolated from each other despite their geographical proximity. The newspaper wrote that permanent and mobile checkpoints, along with physical barriers of various kinds, fenced-off main roads, and limitations on Palestinian traffic on east-west and north-south arteries, have cut off direct transportation links between areas of the West Bank. The newspaper concluded that a new geographic, social and economic reality has emerged in the West Bank.

Israel Radio reported that two Qassam rockets were fired at the western Negev last night. There were no injuries or damage.

Ha'aretz reported that Harvard University has decided to remove its logo from a study by Professor Stephen Walt of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Professor John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago that denounces the pro-Israel lobby's impact on American foreign policy, in order to distance itself from the study's conclusions. Ha'aretz also wrote that Harvard University appended a more strongly worded disclaimer to the study, stating that it reflects the views of its authors only. The former disclaimer said merely that the study "does not necessarily" reflect the university's views.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Ernst Uhrlau, President of the German Foreign Intelligence Service, as telling an American Jewish Committee delegation in Berlin on Thursday: "More than ever, Israel and Europe are a single risk area caught in the crosshairs of international terrorism."

Yediot reported that the PA's Hamas government will be sworn in on Monday.

Yediot cited a delegation of Jews of Libyan origin as saying, following talks in Tripoli with Libyan cabinet ministers, that Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi will provide compensation to the Jews who fled Libya, and that negotiations on the matter will begin in one month. Yediot quoted Rami Kahlon, the President of the Israel-based World Organization of Libyan Jews, as saying that recent talks with Libyan officials are meant to please Europe and the US.

Maariv reported that over the past year, Israel's Consulate General conducted seminars with students from Stanford University, UC Berkeley, and San Jose State University in order to acquaint them with Israeli high-tech's success stories.

Israel Radio cited the Israeli software security company Check Point as saying Thursday that it will withdraw its USD 225-million proposal to acquire Sourcefire, a smaller US rival. The radio said that that the USG vetoed the planned deal for reasons of national security.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Less than a week before the elections in Israel, the US seems to have all but forgotten about them."

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Anyone who admires the courage demonstrated by Ehud Olmert ... should vote for Kadima, or for Labor or Meretz, both of which support an additional withdrawal."

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in Ha'aretz: "The mistake that was made before the PA elections, and the criticism of Washington [by Israeli officials], is spilled milk."

Block Quotes:

1I. "No Great Expectations"

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (March 24): "Less than a week before the elections in Israel, the US seems to have all but forgotten about them. The American media hardly mentions the Israeli democratic process, and the issue is rarely raised in administration briefings. The election whose results are likely to lead to Israel making one of his most historic decisions -- to determine its borders -- is almost unnoticed in the capital of the free world.... The reason for the lack of interest in Washington is the sense that these elections won't make much of a difference. The victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections shut the door on any American-led Middle East peace initiative and buried any remaining Roadmap.... Another reason for American apathy may have to do with Israel's political leaders not making much of an attempt to bring either US public opinion or American Jewish donations into these elections."

II. "Yes, It Is a Referendum"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (March 24): "Binyamin Netanyahu defined the upcoming elections as a referendum on the future of the West Bank, and this is indeed how they should be viewed. Anyone who wants to perpetuate Israel's control over the Palestinian people should vote for one of the parties on the right. Anyone who admires the courage demonstrated by Ehud Olmert, who presented the voters with his plan for a withdrawal from most of the West Bank and a corresponding evacuation of settlements, and even promised that his coalition will include only parties that promise in writing to support the withdrawal, should vote for Kadima, or for Labor or Meretz, both of which support an additional withdrawal.... Any apathy toward the elections, or any sense of being above it all, any self-indulgence, immature attitudes toward democracy or quests for an unattainable political ideal, could easily lead to victory for the right, whose voters are more vigilant -- especially when what is at stake is a government committed to withdrawal."

III. "A Mistake Under US Duress"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in Ha'aretz (March 24): "Israel repeatedly blames Abbas for the rise of Hamas, but Israel has a part in it; although it wanted Fatah to return to power, it provided the movement with only minimal assistance. The Hamas victory has led to another phenomenon -- harsh criticism of the US administration on the part of senior political figures who are speaking on condition of anonymity. And much criticism is also coming from professional entities such as [Israel's] intelligence services. They are speaking angrily about capitulation in the face of the Americans, who adopted a tone of issuing a directive. In meetings that were held, US representatives said that President George W. Bush's instructions were to allow anyone who wanted to participate in democratic elections to do so, 'and this directive will be followed!' Now, they are saying that it's a shame that Israel did not find the courage to reject the American 'advice.' The critics should recall that neither Israel nor Washington uttered any criticism when Abbas promised Hamas members to include them in the elections under their terms, and even promised that when it came to the issue of the refugees, he would support the Hamas demand that they be allowed to return to their homes and their property. The agreement to a period of calm was a heady elixir for Israel, too.... The mistake that was made before the PA elections, and the criticism of Washington, is spilled milk. Now we have to reduce the damage and examine the various possibilities. Washington is not pleased with the Hamas victory either, and wants to bring about a change in the situation, in spite of the fact that it was determined through democratic elections."

12. US-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Columnist Tom Segev wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "One gets the impression that [American Professors Stephen] Walt and [John] Mearsheimer attack U.S. support for Israel because they don't like President Bush."

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative,

independent Jerusalem Post: "On the eve of Israel's elections, Israelis should be deeply concerned about the state of our relations with the United States."

Daniel Levy, the lead Israeli drafter of the Geneva Initiative, who served as a negotiator with the Palestinians, wrote in Ha'aretz: "Defending the occupation has done to the American pro-Israel community what living as an occupier has done to Israel -- muddled both its moral compass and its rational self-interest compass."

Block Quotes:

I. "The Protocols of Harvard and Chicago"

Columnist Tom Segev wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 24): "What begins as an attack on Israel and its lobby, soon turns out to be part of a domestic debate: One gets the impression that [American Professors Stephen] Walt and [John] Mearsheimer attack U.S. support for Israel because they don't like President Bush. One can understand them. Apparently, they won't be angry if the Israel lobby decides that Bush is bad for Israel, and works against him. Nor would they be opposed if someone were to convince the administration to force Israel to withdraw from the territories. They are right: Had the United States saved Israel from itself, life today would be better. Therefore, the authors are also correct in the most important argument in their essay, which unfortunately is too incidental: The Israel lobby in the US harms Israel's true interests.... Now there is great excitement there in America on account of this essay, but maybe not really. Israel's influence is based on an ancient anti-Semitic myth about the Jews who rule the world. This is a myth that is self-fulfilling as long as the world believes in it: If you shatter it, you have eliminated Israel's influence. From that point of view, Walt and Mearsheimer are doing the Israel lobby a good service."

II. "The Jewish Threat"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (March 24): "On the eve of Israel's elections, Israelis should be deeply concerned about the state of our relations with the United States.... If it does nothing else, [American Professors] Walt and Mearsheimer's screed proves the absolute stupidity of the claim that Israeli land giveaways and expulsions of Israelis from their homes increase international sympathy and support for Israel. Their article not only gives Israel no credit for coming to the brink of civil war this summer when it ethnically cleansed Gaza of Jews in the hopes of appeasing international opinion, it claims that Israel intended to bring about Hamas's electoral victory in January in order to force the US to continue to support it..... Finally, Walt and Mearsheimer's decision to publish their essay points to Israel's desperate need for a leader who understands international politics generally and American politics specifically.... Today there is only one Israeli leader capable of rebuilding Israel's standing in the international community generally and in American society particularly. We have only one leader who is capable of bringing about a renewed delegitimization of views like those expressed in Walt and Mearsheimer's essay. His name is Binyamin Netanyahu."

III. "So Pro-Israel That It Hurts"

Daniel Levy, the lead Israeli drafter of the Geneva Initiative, who served as a negotiator with the Palestinians, wrote in Ha'aretz (March 24): "The new John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt study of 'The Israel Lobby [AIPAC] and US Foreign Policy' should serve as a wake-up call, on both sides of the ocean.... Defending the occupation has done to the American pro-Israel community what living as an occupier has done to Israel -- muddled both its moral compass and its rational self-interest compass.... Avoidance of candid discussion might make good sense to the Lobby, but it is unlikely to either advance Israeli interests or the U.S.-Israel relationship. Some talking points for this coming debate can already be suggested: First, efforts to collapse the Israeli and neoconservative agendas into one have been a terrible mistake.... Second, Israel would do well to distance itself from our so-called 'friends' on the Christian evangelical right.... Third, Israel must not be party to the bullying tactics used to silence policy debate in the US and the McCarthyite policing of academia by set-ups like Daniel Pipes'

Campus Watch.... Fourth, the Lobby even denies Israel a luxury that so many other countries benefit from: of having the excuse of external encouragement to do things that are domestically tricky but nationally necessary.... In short, if Israel is indeed entering a new era of national sanity and de-occupation, then the role of the Lobby in U.S.-Israel relations will have to be rethought, and either reformed from within or challenged from without."

JONES